

‘BEST PRACTICES’ IN COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION: IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Community School Alliances Project

Education Development Center, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

The Community School Alliances project (CSA) is the community mobilization component of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored Quality Improvement in Primary Schools (QUIPS) program. QUIPS aims to improve the effectiveness of primary education in Ghana and is part of the initiatives under the Government of Ghana's Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) program. CSA aims to improve community participation in Ghanaian primary schools. The project is highly participatory and strives to build an environment of mutual respect, responsibility and action among community members, schools, and education administrators, as they meet the learning needs of Ghanaian children.

Project Overview

The CSA project works through three broad strategic objectives, which are broken down into a series of more concrete sub-objectives. Sub-objectives are based on a series of 'best practices' for involving communities in education programs, distilled from the experiences of six USAID sponsored projects worldwide¹. CSA activities are designed to produce a measurable, positive change in each sub-objective. The three strategic objectives and corresponding sub-objectives are as follows:

❖ **Increased Community Awareness, Responsibility and Advocacy for Education**

- Build trust in the community (school system and teachers).
- Respond to interests/concerns of school.
- Provide culturally sensitive approach to education.
- Support quality education.
- Support girls'/boys' education (home and school).

❖ **Strengthened Community School Support Organizations**

- Empower local people to act.
- Define roles and responsibilities of partners.
- Strengthen school management structures.
- Develop productive links to education/government authorities.
- Develop productive links to external agencies.

❖ **Enhanced Community Participation in Design, Implementation/Monitoring of School Improvement Efforts**

- Utilize participatory planning and design.
- Mobilize local and district resources.
- Monitor school performance.
- Monitor school finances and assets.
- Develop community leadership and ownership.

The CSA project strives to meet the 'best practice' sub-objectives through a number of interrelated interventions, which are listed on the following page. All interventions are designed to involve and respond to community members. CSA connects each of its intervention strategies to its 15 'best practice' sub-objectives. This linkage is an important tool for monitoring the impact of each intervention. At various times throughout the intervention cycle, stakeholders rate communities' progress toward achieving 'best practice' sub-objectives. This process identifies interventions that need reinforcement to help communities achieve sustainability.

¹ Rugh, A. and Bossert, H. (1998). Involving Communities: Participation in the Delivery of Education Programs. Washington, DC: Creative Associates International, ABEL Project.

- ❖ Baseline Data Collection
- ❖ Participatory Rural Appraisal/Participatory Learning and Action (PRA/PLA)
- ❖ Community-School Improvement Plans (C-SIPs)
- ❖ Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Campaign
 - Community performed drama/public forum.
 - Video drama/public forum.
 - Story picture-cards, calendars and newsletter (print media).
 - Radio, TV and newspaper reports (mass media).
- ❖ Institutional Capacity Building for SMC/PTAs
- ❖ Microgrant Projects
- ❖ Community Match
- ❖ Facilitator Support and Monitoring
- ❖ Impact Data Collection

Instrumentation

In each participating community, CSA uses a multi-faceted monitoring and evaluation protocol to assess progress towards its project objectives. CSA has developed a series of instruments to support the M&E protocol. The core instrument, which is used to assess impact and sustainability, is the *Improving Quality Education Through Community Participation: 'Best Practice' Assessment Instrument*.

The CSA staff, in collaboration with technical consultants, developed the 'Best Practice' Assessment instrument around the 15 'best practice' sub-objectives. Corresponding to each 'best practice' sub-objective and using an innovation configurations methodology with anchored rating scales as described in *Taking Charge of Change*², detailed scale descriptions (rubrics) were prepared and a 'best practice' assessment instrument developed. The descriptions (rubrics) developed for each component use a five point scale: high value (1) describes the ideal situation, low value (5) describes the worse case situation, medium value (3) describes the average situation, and the other two values (2 and 4) describe situations in between. Each 'best practice' sub-objective scale also includes a complete definition of the 'best practice' and identifies the primary and secondary sources to be used for data collection. All of the data presented in this report were collected using the 'best practice' assessment instrument and the data collection procedures described below.

Methodology

The 'best practice' assessment baseline and impact data were collected by District Monitoring Assistants (DMAs), who were made available to the CSA project by the Ghana Education Service (GES). Prior to the first data collection (November 1998), CSA provided the DMAs with a two-day training workshop, which included review of the instrument items, data collection strategies, interview techniques, and field practice. One-day refresher training workshops were provided for each subsequent data collection (June 2000 and November/December 2000).

The data collection process utilized a structured interview technique. Field teams of two conducted extensive interviews with the following eight subgroups of the community: chiefs and elders, Unit Committee, SMC/PTA members, teachers, men, women, girls, and boys. The teams conducted

² Hord, S., Rutherford, W., Huling-Austin, L. and Hall, G. (1987). *Taking Charge of Change*. Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) and Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

interviews with three representatives of each subgroup and synthesized this information to derive a single rating on each sub-objective for each community. Teams also recorded supportive descriptive information on the rating forms. The data collection activity was supervised by a local Ghanaian consultant and CSA staff members.

At the end of each data collection activity, the DMA teams assembled with CSA home office staff for a data debriefing session. During these sessions, CSA staff members carefully reviewed the completed instruments with the DMAs. The DMAs were then asked for clarification and justification of any ratings which were not fully supported by written rationales and descriptions.

Sample

The QUIPS program is implemented in phases, or cohorts, with each cohort receiving approximately two years of project interventions from each of the implementing projects. For each cohort, a number of communities, designated as partnership communities, are selected in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service (GES) to participate in the program. To date, two cohorts have completed the intervention cycle: Cohort 1, with 18 partnership communities, and Cohort 2, with 27 partnership communities, giving a total of 45 partnership communities.

Presented in this paper are the observed impacts of the CSA community mobilization intervention model on community participation in these 45 communities and the sustainability potential of these impacts.

ANALYSIS OF IMPACT

The CSA project examines impact in terms of both significant change on project indicators and resulting level of performance of communities. In other words, it is important to determine not only if partnership communities are performing at a higher level than before project intervention activities, but also to examine the level of performance that they have achieved. Following are discussions of both statistically significant change and of attainment of high performance.

Significant Change on ‘Best Practice’ Sub-objectives

When assessing statistically significant change, each of the 18 ‘best practice’ sub-objectives is analyzed separately because each represents a distinct focus of the project. Cohorts are also analyzed separately because of slight differences in implementation. Therefore, the analysis of significant change that follows includes separate sections for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2; later analyses, which discuss performance as related to project goals, use aggregated data from both cohorts.

Cohort 1. The ‘best practice’ instrumentation was developed by CSA after the project activities in Cohort 1 had been underway for approximately 10 months, meaning that no baseline data exist for this cohort. Therefore, during the impact data collection in June 2000, which was approximately 2 1/2 years after the initiation of CSA project activities, ‘best practice’ data was also collected in a sample of 18 comparison communities. Impact for Cohort 1 was then assessed by conducting a post-treatment comparison using the Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon test, which compares the central tendency (median) of two independent samples.

The Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon test was performed using the responses for all 18 partnership and all 18 comparison communities for each of the 18 ‘best practice’ sub-objectives. The results of these tests, provided in Table 1, indicate that the partnership communities performed significantly higher ($p < .05$) than the comparison communities on all 18 ‘best practice’ sub-objectives. Furthermore, frequency distributions for the partnership communities on the sub-objectives, also shown in Table 1, illustrate that on 17 of the 18 sub-objectives, at least half of the community ratings were in the high performance range (ratings of 1 or 2).

'Best Practice' Sub-Objectives	Partnership/Comparison	Frequency Distributions					Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	2-tailed significance
		5	4	3	2	1					
1.1 Trust in School System	P			5	13		14.36	87.500	258.500	-2.686	.007
	C		1	12	5		22.64				
1.2 Trust in Teachers	P		1	4	10	3	11.97	44.500	215.500	-3.869	.000
	C	2	7	7	2		25.03				
2.0 Respond to Interests/Concerns of School	P			2	10	6	11.67	39.000	210.000	-4.084	.000
	C	1	8	4	5		25.33				
3.0 Provide Culturally Sensitive Approach	P	1	1	6	9	1	12.75	58.500	229.500	-3.410	.001
	C	4	6	7	1		24.25				
4.0 Support Quality Education	P		1	1	13	3	11.36	33.500	204.500	-4.239	.000
	C	1	7	9		1	25.64				
5.1 Support Girls' Education – school factors	P			4	10	4	15.28	104.00	275.000	-2.053	.040
	C		1	7	10		21.72				
5.2 Support Girls' Education – home factors	P			4	12	2	12.39	52.000	223.000	-3.709	.000
	C		8	6	4		24.61				
6.0 Empower Local People to Act	P		1	1	14	2	11.83	42.000	213.000	-4.065	.000
	C	1	6	8	3		25.17				
7.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Community Members	P		1	5	9	3	12.22	49.000	220.000	-3.778	.000
	C		7	10	1		24.78				
7.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers	P		1		15	2	12.83	60.000	231.000	-3.626	.000
	C	1	4	7	6		24.17				
8.0 Strengthen School Management Structures	P			3	14	1	11.03	27.500	198.500	-4.510	.000
	C	3	8	5	2		25.97				
9.0 Develop Productive Links to Government Authorities	P			10	7	1	11.17	30.000	201.000	-4.413	.000
	C	7	5	6			25.83				
10.0 Develop Productive Links to External Agencies	P		1	2	10	5	10.47	17.500	188.500	-4.694	.000
	C	4	7	7			26.53				
11.0 Utilize Participatory Planning and Design	P		1	2	13	2	10.75	22.500	193.500	-4.632	.000
	C	3	10	4	1		26.25				
12.0 Mobilize Local and District Resources	P			5	13		11.72	40.000	211.000	-4.442	.000
	C	1	1	16			25.28				
13.0 Monitor School Performance	P			5	13		12.31	50.500	221.500	-3.851	.000
	C	1	4	11	2		24.69				
14.0 Monitor School Finances and Assets	P		1	8	8	1	11.14	29.500	200.500	-4.371	.000
	C	4	9	5			25.86				
15.0 Develop Community Leadership and Ownership	P		2	2	14		11.72	40.000	211.000	-4.089	.000
	C	2	8	7	1		25.28				

Note: Ratings of 5 indicate low performance and ratings of 1 indicate high performance. Therefore, lower mean ranks indicate higher levels of performance.

Cohort 2. Impact for Cohort 2 was assessed by conducting a pre-treatment post-treatment comparison with the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test, which looks for a shift in location (median) due to the intervention. In this case, the data from the baseline (November 1998) and impact (November/December 2000) data collections for all 27 partnership communities for each of the 18 'best practice' sub-objectives were used. Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests, provided in Table 2, indicate that the partnership communities performed significantly higher ($p < .05$) at impact than at baseline on 15 of the 18 sub-

objectives. Community level improvements can be observed in the frequencies of ‘negative ranks’ in the data, indicating that the impact rating for the community was higher than the baseline rating.

‘Best Practice’ Sub-Objectives	Negative Ranks	Positive Ranks	Ties	Z	2-tailed significance
1.1 Trust in School System	14	1	12	-2.780	.005
1.2 Trust in Teachers	13	4	10	-2.295	.022
2.0 Respond to Interests/ Concerns of School	21	1	5	-4.104	.000
3.0 Provide Culturally Sensitive Approach	4	6	17	-.632	.527
4.0 Support Quality Education	16	1	10	-3.463	.001
5.1 Support Girls’ Education – school factors	11	0	16	-3.017	.003
5.2 Support Girls’ Education – home factors	13	4	10	-2.295	.022
6.0 Empower Local People to Act	12	4	11	-2.209	.027
7.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Community Members	14	5	8	-2.276	.023
7.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers	12	6	9	-1.039	.299
8.0 Strengthen School Management Structures	15	1	11	-3.337	.001
9.0 Develop Productive Links to Government Authorities	4	10	13	-1.604	.109
10.0 Develop Productive Links to External Agencies	14	1	12	-3.234	.001
11.0 Utilize Participatory Planning and Design	15	0	12	-3.493	.000
12.0 Mobilize Local and District Resources	16	1	10	-3.499	.000
13.0 Monitor School Performance	21	0	6	-4.203	.000
14.0 Monitor School Finances and Assets	11	2	14	-2.684	.007
15.0 Develop Community Leadership and Ownership	19	0	8	-3.963	.000

Note: Negative Ranks indicate pairs where the impact score was higher (better) than the baseline score. Positive Ranks indicate pairs where the baseline score was higher than the impact score.

The three sub-objectives where no significant change was found between baseline and impact were 3.0, 7.2, and 9.0. Sub-objective 7.2, Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers, had a substantial number of communities (12) improving their rating and sub-objectives 3.0, Provide Culturally Sensitive Approach, and 9.0, Develop Productive Links to Government Authorities, had a substantial number of ties (no change in rating), 17 and 13 respectively, but overall there was no significant improvement.

In the case of sub-objective 3.0, Provide Culturally Sensitive Approach, the ratings are based on the ‘best practice’ assessment criteria of schools instituting flexible school schedules, allowing flexible payment of school fees, and integrating local cultural traditions and resource people into the school curriculum. In terms of influencing the school curriculum, the communities face a significant challenge, both because they have to be careful not to aggravate teachers, who might think that community members are attempting to infringe on their professional territory, and because the curriculum is fixed by GES.

These factors also enter somewhat into the difficulties with sub-objective 7.2, Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers, where the ratings are based on the ‘best practice’ assessment criteria of teacher/community interactions, consistent and effective discipline, and teacher use of instructional time. Communities are working hard to promote good relationships with teachers. These relationships can sometimes become strained when community members attempt to influence change in classroom level practices. Qualified

teachers do not always understand or appreciate the responsibilities of community based organizations in terms of teacher performance.

Finally, sub-objective 9.0, Develop Productive Links to Government Authorities, focuses on the ‘best practice’ assessment criteria of community/district interactions and linkages and community support of district-initiated development projects. For this sub-objective, communities are somewhat reliant on district level structures and officers to achieve success. In some cases, the community attempts to forge a link, but the district is not responsive. In other cases, the appropriate district structure may not even be active or involved in the education process. This can present a roadblock to a community and they can have only very limited influence until these types of districts are more effectively sensitized to the community’s role in the education process.

Achievement of High Performance

The CSA project focuses on encouraging/influencing high performance in nine focus areas: empowerment, participation, partnerships, resources, transparency, management, gender, trust, and quality. These focus areas are each defined by two relevant ‘best practice’ sub-objectives, as detailed in Table 3. High performance in each focus area is determined based on the community ratings on the two sub-objectives. A community is considered to have exhibited high performance in a focus area if they receive a high performance score (1 or 2) on one of the sub-objectives and at least an average performance score (1, 2, or 3) on the other sub-objective. It is the goal of the CSA project that 80% of partnership communities reach a high performance level in each of the nine focus areas.

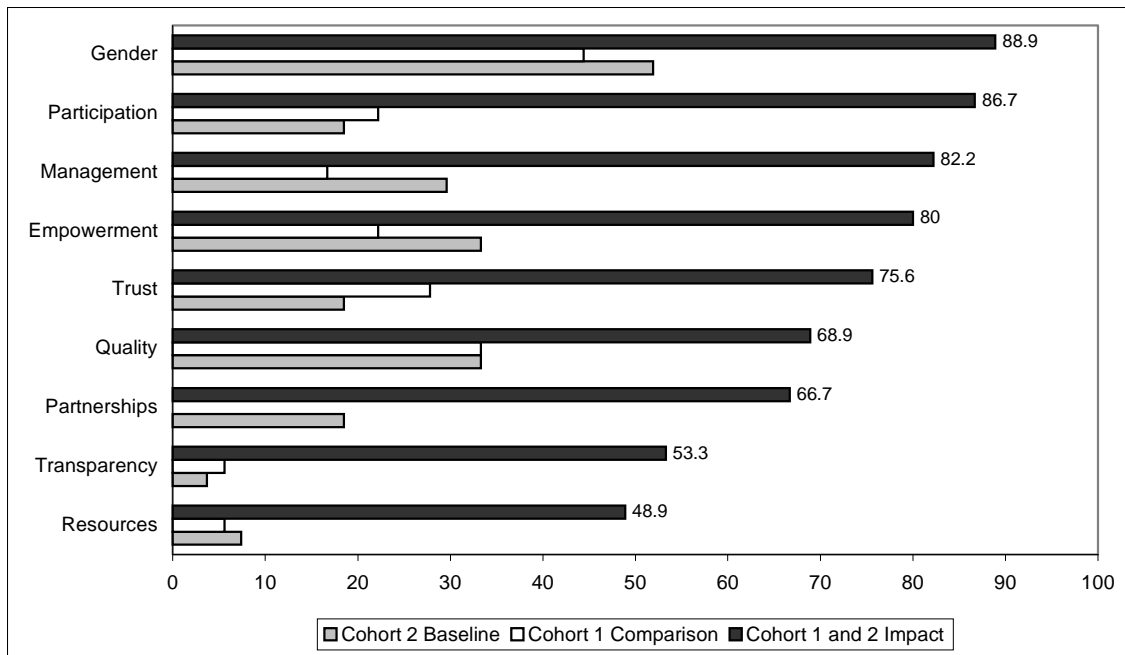
Following is a discussion of the observed progress in the nine CSA focus areas for Cohorts 1 and 2. Because this analysis is not based on statistical tests, the 45 Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 communities are combined to give an overall picture of project success.

Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of Cohort 1 and 2 communities that achieved high performance in each of the nine focus areas at the time of impact data collection. The data from the

Cohort 1 comparison communities at impact and the Cohort 2 partnership communities at baseline are also shown to illustrate the degree of progress on each focus area. Comparisons of these three data points for each focus area indicate that substantial progress has been made on all.

Table 3. Definitions of CSA Focus Areas	
Empowerment	
6.0	Empower Local People to Act
7.1	Roles and Responsibilities of Community Members
Gender	
5.1	Support Girls’ Education School Factors
5.2	Support Girls’ Education Home Factors
Management	
8.0	Strengthen School Management Structures
15.0	Develop Community Leadership and Ownership
Participation	
2.0	Respond to Interests/Concerns of School
11.0	Utilize Participatory Planning and Design
Partnerships	
9.0	Develop Productive Links to Education/Government Authorities
10.0	Develop Productive Links to External Agencies
Quality	
4.0	Support Quality Education
7.2	Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers
Resources	
3.0	Provide Culturally Sensitive Approach
12.0	Mobilize Local and District Resources
Transparency	
13.0	Monitor School Performance
14.0	Monitor School Finances and Assets
Trust	
1.1	Trust in School System
1.2	Trust in Teachers

Figure 1 Percentage of Communities Achieving High Performance in CSA Focus Areas



For four focus areas, gender, participation, management, and empowerment, the CSA goal of 80% of communities achieving high performance was accomplished. Three other focus areas, trust, quality, and partnerships, were close behind, with 76%, 69%, and 67% of communities, respectively. This was a difference of as few as 2 to 6 communities to reach the 80% goal. The remaining two focus areas, transparency and resources, with 53% and 49% of communities respectively, had a more moderate level of success, but Figure 1 illustrates that a great deal of progress was made in each, considering that these two focus areas were extremely low initially (each less than 10% of communities on either the Cohort 1 comparison or Cohort 2 baseline).

For transparency, the moderate level of high performance was mainly due to average ratings on both transparency sub-objectives or low performance ratings on sub-objective 14.0, Monitor School Finances and Assets. Table 4 illustrates the relationship between the scores on the two sub-objectives related to transparency, 14.0 and 13.0, Monitor School Performance. In total, 21 communities (47%) did not meet the high performance criteria (indicated in the shaded portion of Table 4). In 8 of these cases, the scores on both sub-objectives were 3, indicating average performance. The remaining 13 cases had low performance scores on sub-objective 14.0, six of which were paired with a high performance score on sub-objective 13.0 and the other 7 with a score of 3 on sub-objective 13.0. There were no low performance scores for objective 13.0. This indicates that greater emphasis needs to be placed on the focus area of transparency, especially in terms of the transparency of school finances and assets.

Table 4. Crosstabs of Transparency Sub-Objectives

		Sub-objective 14.0				
		1	2	3	4	5
Sub-objective 13.0	1					
	2	2	11	10	5	1
	3		1	8	7	
	4					
	5					

Transparency is challenging for many reasons, mainly because it requires substantial shifts in attitudes and behaviors at many levels. When considering a high level of achievement in transparency in school finances, it is necessary for the district to believe in and support the involvement of the School Management Committee (SMC) in the management of school finances, for the headteacher and SMC to

accept and perform their roles properly, and for the community to recognize their rights and assert them by demanding information. All of these things need to happen in an environment where people may not be eager to cooperate. Many district officers are reluctant to change the status quo of headteachers being solely responsible for school funds and headteachers sometimes enjoy the prestige of having this responsibility. Community members are also reluctant to pressure the SMC and headteacher for fear of damaging relationships. Despite all of this, CSA has seen meaningful improvement in this area and continues to refine strategies to encourage more activity. To date, most influence has been through the community based organizations (SMC and PTA), but it is probably necessary to also focus more attention at the district level, by encouraging them to enforce the policy of involvement of SMCs, and through the community, by helping them to facilitate community meetings that address school finances and assets.

For resources, the moderate level of high performance was a result of both sub-objectives, 3.0 Provide Culturally Sensitive Approach and 12.0 Mobilize Local and District Resources. Table 5 illustrates the relationship between the scores on these two sub-objectives. In total, 23 communities (51%) did not meet the high performance criteria (indicated in the shaded portion of Table 5). In 11 of these cases, both of the scores were 3, indicating average performance. In only 3 of the cases were both of the scores in the low performance range, but an additional 9 cases had at least one low performance score. Results for sub-objective 12.0 were slightly better than those for sub-objective 3.0, but both need additional attention.

Table 5. Crosstabs of Resources Sub-Objectives

		Sub-objective 12.0				
		1	2	3	4	5
Sub-objective 3.0	1		1			
	2		9	2		
	3	1	9	11	1	
	4		4	4	2	
	5				1	

The challenges of achieving high performance on sub-objective 3.0 have been discussed in detail above. Sub-objective 12.0 focuses on the ‘best practice’ assessment criteria of successfully mobilizing resources locally, from the district, and from benevolent organizations. Communities tend to perform very well in terms of mobilizing local resources, as this is an area which they can control, however, there is more difficulty when attempting to mobilize from external sources, such as the district or other organizations. Often, communities make good efforts in trying to secure external resources, but district structures and/or other private organizations are not responsive. This can make it more difficult for communities to achieve high performance in this area.

Analysis of High/Low Performing Communities

CSA is very interested in examining the factors that contribute to high and low performance in partnership communities. To this end, a series of monitoring processes are utilized and special studies are performed to investigate specific areas of interest. These activities provide the project with substantial amounts of qualitative data to enhance the results of the ‘best practice’ assessments and suggest possible factors influencing results. It should be noted that ‘high’ and ‘low’ performing categories are relative terms. CSA rarely encounters a community that does not have some degree of positive response to the project; the distinction comes in related to the degree of success, hence the term ‘low’ performing.

Community Profiles. From time to time, CSA selects high and low performing communities and conducts in-depth analyses of existing data to try to understand the differing performance levels. Profiles of these communities are developed to serve as a guide in enhancing the understanding of both the community and the project.

Through these in-depth analyses, CSA has found that there are several community factors that tend to affect success, both in terms of influencing and hindering positive change. Communities that are the most successful tend to be smaller and more isolated. Smaller communities are usually more cohesive,

which aids in mobilization and the implementation of new mutually agreed upon processes and regulations. They also are likely to have only one primary school in the community, which allows for concentrated effort. Successful communities are also ones that have access to local resources and a willingness to contribute. Resources need not be financial, but are important in building a sense of ownership of the school. Finally, successful communities almost always have two or three strong local leaders who are devoted to supporting quality education.

Less successful communities are often those that are located in urban, peri-urban and/or commercial centers. These communities tend to be larger and more spread out, contain more than one school, and have parents/community members of diverse backgrounds and professions. These factors can make mobilization, consensus planning, and implementation of new decisions difficult, mainly because the community members tend to be occupied in other endeavors. These obstacles can be overcome when there is a very strong local leader, but in the absence of such a person or people, it is very difficult for sustainable change to take hold.

Local Change Leaders. Because of the emergence of local change leaders as such an influential factor to success, CSA conducted a special study to identify and understand emerging local leaders who were active in promoting change in their school-community³. The study focused on the facilitative style of the local leaders, what motivated them, what were their concerns, and what it would take for them to stay active. The study found that 61% of the local leaders who were active in promoting and supporting change in their school-communities were Initiators or Initiator-Managers, another 30% were Managers, and less than 9% Responders. Most had been active previously and the QUIPS program helped to motivate and focus them. The more active communities had multiple leaders, including an active head teacher. The QUIPS workshops and training, tangible community/parent cooperation, and improved performance of the children were key to motivating the leaders to stay active. The leaders were mostly concerned about continued community cooperation/parent attitude, sustaining the project, teacher motivation and transfer, and continued improvement of facilities. The continued involvement of multiple Initiator or Initiator-Manager type school-community leaders as local change facilitators was key to an active school-community, while workshops/training, tangible community cooperation, pupil performance results, financial resources and improved facilities were key to sustainability.

ANALYSIS OF SUSTAINABILITY

CSA defines sustainability as the likelihood that the impact or result of a specified intervention strategy will become part of the on-going daily life of the school-community after the donor funding or intervention has ceased. Five of the focus areas discussed above, empowerment, participation, resources, transparency, and partnerships, are used to assess the sustainability potential of community level impacts. These measures were adapted from a review of USAID literature and other donor agency experience with sustainable results⁴. Based on the 10 sub-objectives that define the five focus areas, a sustainability index is calculated for each community by determining the percentage of high performance scores that the community received on those sub-objectives. The index, which ranges from 0.0 to 1.0, represents the percentage of high performance scores received on the 10 relevant sub-objectives. Based on the sustainability index, communities are placed in one of four sustainability categories: no sustainability (0.0 through 0.4), low sustainability (0.4 through 0.6), moderate sustainability (0.6 through 0.8), and high sustainability (0.8 through 1.0). It is the goal of the CSA project that 80% of partnership communities reach at least a moderate sustainability level by the end of project interventions.

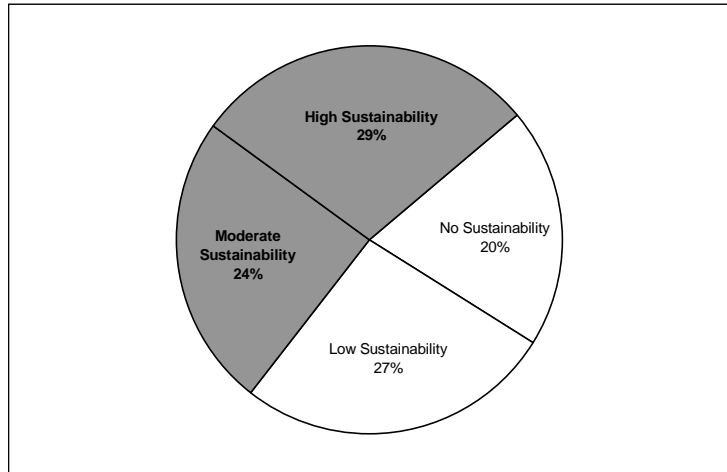
Potential sustainability levels at the end of project interventions for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 were assessed based on the 'best practice' impact data. As with the discussion of high performance, the data for the 45

³ Boardman, G.R., Evans, R.L & Ahlijah-Agamah, S. (2000). Community Support for Education: Local Change Leaders, CSA Special Study No. 1, Accra, Ghana.

⁴ Chesterfield, R. (1998). A System for Monitoring the Sustainability of Girls' Education Initiatives. Washington DC: USAID Sponsored, Juarez and Associates.

communities were combined to give an overall picture of project success. Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of partnership communities that fell into each of the four sustainability categories at the end of the scheduled project intervention cycle. A total of 24 communities (53%) reached at least a moderate sustainability range, with 13 of these communities scoring in the high sustainability range. This fell short of the goal of 80%; however, 12 of the remaining 21 communities, or an additional 27%, scored in the low sustainability range. If these communities were raised to the moderate level, the 80% goal would be met.

Figure 2 Sustainability Levels of Cohort 1 and 2 Partnership Schools at Impact



As illustrated in the previous section, the major obstacle to attaining sustainable change seems to be in the areas of resources and transparency, and to a lesser extent, partnerships. Table 6 illustrates the frequency distributions for each of the ten sub-objectives that define the sustainability focus areas. The three sub-objectives that have the lowest percentage of high performance scores (3.0, 9.0, and 14.0) contribute to the focus areas of resources, partnerships, and transparency, respectively. All of the other seven objectives have at least 53% of scores within the high performance range. Only when Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 'best practice' data are collected in the future will it be possible to assess the appropriateness of the sustainability index as a predictor of future activity. However, assuming that the index will prove to be a suitable indicator of sustainability potential, these data indicate that the project needs to continue to place strong emphasis on the five sustainability focus areas, especially transparency and resources.

Focus Area	Sub-Objectives	5	4	3	2	1	Percentage of High Performance Scores
Empowerment	6.0 Empower Local People to Act		1	9	33	2	78%
	7.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Community Members		2	18	22	3	56%
Participation	2.0 Respond to Interests/Concerns of School			7	31	7	84%
	11.0 Utilize Participatory Planning and Design		3	10	29	3	71%
Partnerships	9.0 Develop Productive Links to Education/Government Authorities		10	23	11	1	27%
	10.0 Develop Productive Links to External Agencies		2	11	26	6	71%
Resources	3.0 Provide Culturally Sensitive Approach	1	10	22	1	1	4%
	12.0 Mobilize Local and District Resources		3	18	23	1	53%
Transparency	13.0 Monitor School Performance			16	29		64%
	14.0 Monitor School Finances and Assets	1	12	18	12	2	31%

Note: Ratings of 5 indicate low performance and ratings of 1 indicate high performance.

CONCLUSION/LESSONS LEARNED

In general, the results of this impact evaluation are encouraging. The data indicate that the CSA project has been successful in influencing significant positive change in community participation in education. In addition, many communities have not only realized a change in activity, but they have attained high performance levels in several focus areas. More than half of the partnership communities have reached performance levels in the sustainability focus areas that indicate that changes in their participation are likely to be sustained in the long term.

The CSA project has set high goals for measurement of success and this evaluation has indicated some areas where these goals have not been entirely met. However, because the QUIPS program is on-going, results are used not only to reflect on success, but also to guide future project activities. The phased cohort approach affords the project the unique opportunity to utilize the analysis of complete data sets in the adaptation of project interventions to accommodate the most successful strategies and to address areas where there may be lack of sufficient emphasis. Therefore, the following lessons learned are also accompanied by potential revised project strategies.

- ❖ The project intervention cycle is sufficient and effective to influence significant change in most, if not all, of the ‘best practice’ sub-objectives. Cohort 1 had slightly better results than Cohort 2 in terms of significant improvement, but Cohort 1 received approximately 6 more months of project interventions and, in general, both cohorts were successful in enacting positive change in community participation in education.
- ❖ The 2-year project intervention cycle is sufficient and effective in raising communities to high performance levels in the CSA focus areas of gender, participation, management, and empowerment. These areas appear to be sufficiently addressed by the standard project interventions.
- ❖ Communities are making excellent progress in the CSA focus areas of trust, quality, and partnerships, but performance levels are not as high as CSA would like to see. This indicates that for future cohorts, the project intervention activities that focus on these areas should be emphasized and monitoring of these areas should be enhanced.
- ❖ Approximately half of the partnership communities have achieved high performance levels in the CSA focus areas of resources and transparency. This represents substantial progress in two areas which tend to start at very low levels, but CSA would like to see more communities in the high performance category. This indicates that new or refresher activities related to these focus areas need to be integrated into the project intervention cycle.
- ❖ A slight majority (53%) of partnership communities have moderate or high sustainability levels. Again, this is a notable result, but CSA would like to see even more communities in these sustainability categories. This indicates that, in addition to integrating new activities into the project intervention cycle, as mentioned above, communities need periodic reinforcing activities after the completion of the cycle to keep their performance levels high. These activities include attendance in refresher training workshops, inclusion in radio programs, and interactions with other communities.
- ❖ Continued analysis of what works and what doesn’t work is necessary to increase the likelihood of success for more communities. There are community factors which influence community receptivity to the project intervention cycle. This suggests that communities should be selected based on those factors that make them most receptive to the intervention. When communities with contrasting factors are selected, project intervention activities need to be tailored to their particular situation.
- ❖ The presence and effectiveness of local change agents is a key element of school-community change. This indicates that it is necessary to continue to identify potential local leaders in each community and to nurture and support them in their efforts to effect positive change in community participation in education.